From Being an Entrepreneur to Being Entrepreneurial: The Consolidation of Neoliberalism in Ontario's Universities

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ABSTRACT: Extracurricular programs designed to provide Ontario's university students with an opportunity to explore and develop their entrepreneurial talents are now at every university in Ontario. Largely ignored by mainstream scholars, the significance of such extracurricular programs should not be under-estimated simply because they are not part of the regular curriculum in most programs. On the contrary, the new entrepreneurial programs mark the ascension of neoliberal notions of self-help and self-reliance to the very core of Ontario's universities. Tracking the development and evolution of neoliberal understandings of entrepreneurship, helps to illustrate how being an entrepreneur and being entrepreneurial are the by-products of very calculated efforts by Chicago School economists Milton Friedman, Arthur Director and others. Accounting for the agency of students is also critical to understanding the recent outgrowth of extracurricular entrepreneurial programs, just as it is to understanding the potential to press back against the neoliberal program.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurialism; Higher Education; Crowd Funding; Inequality

All too frequently, the degree to which students and faculty have been active agents in *making* and maintaining Ontario's system of higher education is either ignored or underestimated. And in so failing to either recognize or sufficiently emphasize the agency of students and faculty in making higher education in the province, scholars have often tended to also underestimate how rooted and extensive neoliberalism is, not just within the university but also, and perhaps more importantly, outside

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Ontario's universities too.[2] As such, the significance of any particular policy or program also tends to be misdiagnosed generally as little more than an indication of the fact that neoliberal discourses and policy frameworks have become hegemonic within Ontario's policymaking and university administrative circles. The parameters of neoliberalism are thereby made into a laundry list of policies, some more disciplinary and coercive than others, but none of which affect "everyday life" in ways that have transformed and which continue to transform our subjective self-understanding, not the least as scholars concerned with understanding the dynamics of higher education in Ontario.[3]

When open to and considerate of the agency of students and faculty in the remaking of higher education in Ontario, and, at the same time, to a similarly expansive understanding of neoliberalism, one where hegemonic policy paradigms are seen to have a life and a significance beyond either policymaking circles or disembodied notions of "globalization" and "austerity" and not any clear relation to everyday life. In this regard, the recent emergence of extra-curricular programs designed to encourage and support student entrepreneurialism in all of Ontario's

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[2] Throughout, I define neoliberalism as a program of accumulation that emerged after 1980 in response to the crisis of the immediate post-war order. Under the aegis of key states and the US in particular, the neoliberal program of accumulation is premised upon the ability of investors to rapidly invest and divest into and out of different jurisdictions. Such investment decisions are based primarily, though by no means exclusively, on relative levels of labour market flexibility. Such flexibility is not understood as simply a measure of relative wage rates. Rather, labour market flexibility is better thought of as an ongoing approximation of capital's potential to accumulate profit in a particular jurisdiction given multiple considerations. The neoliberal era is also described by the ascent of neoclassical cum neo-liberal theory to a position of unrivalled and global hegemony. The 'neoliberal university' and or 'neoliberalism in the university' is intended to describe the imposition and normalization of market or market-type signalling at multiple levels (i.e. prices or quasi-prices are attached to virtually all aspects of the university), and institutional functional preoccupation with the (re)production of flexible/quiescent labour and "monopolizable" (patentable/ownable) forms of knowledge. For a fuller description of neoliberalism and its development see (Harvey, 2005; Gindin and Panitch, 2012; Fast, 2013). For a fuller description of what is meant by the neoliberal university see Newstadt, 2013.

[3] What I describe below as "mainstream" scholarship on Ontario's system of higher education is the product of a group of scholars whose work on the subject is most frequently cited and/or relied upon both in the extant literature and in public policy debates. Thinkers like Michael Skolnick, Glen Jones, Donald Fisher, David Trick, Knell Rubenson, Ian Clark, Theresa Shanahan, Paul Axelrod, and a handful of others have produced a wide body of literature. Their work is frequently referenced in government reports and has even been sponsored by government agencies with an eye to having them outline a policy program for the province to follow. Also, Skolnik, Jones, and Fisher have played key roles on various government agencies or advisory bodies at various points in their careers. Axelrod is the dean of education at York University in Toronto. Many of the above have also published together on the subject, and their work – and supervision – has had a clear impact of the extant literature, such that it is hardly a stretch to describe their work as comprising a kind of canon on Ontario's system of higher education. As I outline below, these scholars also tend to share a common ontological and epistemological framework.

universities is neither marginal to the operation of the university as a whole nor merely about teaching students "disentitlement", as two critics recently suggested (Sears and Cairns 2014).[4] Rather, the recent fascination with student entrepreneurialism is also demonstrative of students' desire to learn what the proponents of such programs hope to teach: a more individuated and consumer-based form of *entitlement*, one that seeks to "free" the individual consumer from the fetters of – or potential for – collective action. In other words, the emergence of business incubators and crowd-funding programs in Ontario's universities suggests that patterns of interaction and behaviour that neoliberal capitalism and neoliberal policies encourage are already well-established in and outside of those institutions. What this in turn means is that the new entrepreneurial programs, though extracurricular, will likely play an increasingly notable role in the further extension and consolidation of the facile instrumentalism (like notions of self-help and "free" competition) that describe neoliberal ideology. Thus, the new entrepreneurialism will work to undermine the potential for deep and critical analysis in Ontario's universities and to further normalize the kinds of hyper-competitive conditions, managerial rationalities, and disciplinary capacities that all but force even the most critically minded scholars to somehow, and in some way, accommodate.

THE UBIQUITY AND AMBIGUITY OF ENTREPRENEURIALISM

That ostensibly isolated and extracurricular business incubator and crowd-funding programs have a significance that cannot be diagnosed when we focus on the fact that such programs are optional and extracurricular, as is the norm, is best illustrated by those who have championed such programs most aggressively. The remarkable ambiguity of the language used by government agencies and university administrators in discussing the new entrepreneurial programs makes it difficult to discern what the intended ambit of "entrepreneurial education" really is, or who Ontario's "student entrepreneurs" really are. Just as quickly as entrepreneurs are described in terms that set them apart from the rest of the student population, so is one pushed to conceive of every student as a kind of entrepreneur. Though clearly also suggestive of some grander policy design, the ambiguity of the language also plays

[4] For Sears and Cairns (2014) "teaching disentitlement" is done, "either openly in the curriculum (for example, through entrepreneurship education) or through the structure of the system (for example, through user pay, sharp tuition increases, and ever-expanding class sizes".

on another significant, though far less commented on, manifestation of neoliberalism: the idea that students could be entrepreneurs, or even that entrepreneurialism could be learned. Before turning to this issue, it is helpful to briefly explore the ambiguity just described.

In a recent report by the body that represents all of Ontario's universities, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), entrepreneurship is described in terms that do little to help readers understand that the business incubators and crowd-funding programs explored therein, are in fact extra-curricular, optional, and not intended as mandated interventions into curricular design:

> "Entrepreneurship, upon which economists say economic growth depends, has moved from the margins to the mainstream of university education. There are entire programs devoted to teaching students what it takes to invent the next big thing, attract investors and take their service or product to market…As a result, universities are now preparing students to create their own jobs, as well as jobs for other people. At the core, they are developing an innovation capacity in students that will enable them to be "intra-preneurs" – employees who behave like entrepreneurs within the context of a large organization. This is much more than an interesting campus trend. It is the key to success for many thousands of students. It is vital to the strength of the economy … Many thousands of students a year are learning entrepreneurship in dozens of programs and hundreds of courses at Ontario's 21 publicly funded universities. This focus on innovation is reaping rewards, with hundreds of startup companies being created each year." (COU, 2013, 1)

The Government of Ontario has also suggested that the proper purview of "entrepreneurial education" is rather broad. In a recent discussion paper intended to frame debate over higher education policy in the Province, the Government asks:

> "The government is committed to providing new and dedicated support for Ontario's young entrepreneurs. How can the postsecondary education system contribute to this objective through experiential learning initiatives? What kinds of curricula, programs, or support are needed to increase the labour-market readiness and entrepreneurship capacity of students graduating from Ontario colleges and universities? What lessons can be learned from the apprenticeship

> programs as we design new experiential learning opportunities for Ontario college and university students?" (MTCU 2012, 21)

In those instances where either/both the government and university administrators have indicated that entrepreneurial programming is/will continue to be circumscribed and not completely generalized, such is often discussed with reference to government sponsored efforts to ensure greater institutional "differentiation" between the province's eighteen publicly assisted universities. Apparently, by having some institutions focus on developing students' entrepreneurial talents, while others look to develop their research skills, the government's allegedly "arms-length" advisory body, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) claims that it intends to both provide on-going support for entrepreneurialism and sufficient institutional autonomy so as to ensure programmatic diversity (and academic freedom).[5] But the discourse around "differentiation", which is how the government is described its efforts to direct institutional and programmatic focus/diversity, is also contaminated with references and allusions to the purported benefits of entrepreneurialism, so much so that one is again forced to wonder about the programmatic and curricular limits of "entrepreneurial learning":

> "Differentiation promotes institutional quality and system competitiveness by enabling each postsecondary institution to grow preferentially in those areas where it already excels, or aspires to excel. Higher quality programs means that the credentials students receive upon graduation are more highly valued; this makes the students more competitive relative to those from other jurisdictions and makes Ontario universities more attractive to international students." (Weingarten and Deller, 2010, 17)

In other words, by imposing competitive pressures the government believes it can compel both students and our institutions to behave as would any wise entrepreneur, in a manner that would exploit and capitalize on their competitive advantages. Again, beyond the obvious fetishism for the alleged efficiency of markets, what is striking about such discursive constructions is the degree to which they are replete with references to entrepreneurialism. Such references are what distinguishes

[5] With remarkable alacrity the HEQCO's recommendations have either anticipated or mirrored government policy. And the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), has even suggested that the HEQCO's research is perhaps less "objective" than is sometimes claimed by either the HEQCO or the Government.

the current discourse around entrepreneurialism in Ontario's system of higher education, as something other than a classically liberal articulation of the same idea. And this not only raises the spectre of neoliberalism, it also begs that we consider how and why such articulations have become more widely comprehensible, not least to students and faculty.

As it happens, the ubiquity of entrepreneurialism is a relatively recent phenomenon, one which follows hotly on the heels of a series of very deliberate and concerted attempts to both revise and extend neoclassical and neoliberal ideas. Indeed, the foundations of the "new", more inclusive and encompassing entrepreneurialism were laid over sixty years ago, when the fathers of contemporary neoliberalism set about trying to develop – with generous support from the Volcker Foundation – the theoretical and discursive basis for what they always conceived of as a political project. More specifically, between the 1940s and early 1950s three theoretical "innovations" facilitated and helped drive the ideational, ideological, and discursive extension of entrepreneurialism. First was Hayek's redefinition of the central problematic of economics, which posited markets as a kind of super-computer, massively more dynamic than mere human beings (Mirowski, 2011, 26). Second, was the neoliberal reconciliation with monopoly, which made market structure irrelevant, anti-trust legislation a fetter on competition, and neoclassical narratives about perfect competition and equilibrium central to public policy (van Horn, 2009). And third was the concomitant development of "entrepreneurship studies", which, during the 1950s, drew heavily from the Chicago School in making entrepreneurship less about business enterprise and more a kind of learned decision-making capacity useable in any and every context (Soltow, 1968; Blaug, 1995; Rocha, 2012). By the middle of the 1950s the theoretical stage was set: the market had been inscribed as central to the efficient allocation of scarce resources; the state was resurrected as an invaluable champion in that cause; every organization was subject to intense competition; and entrepreneurialism was effectively freed from the fetters of the corporation and turned into a generalizable set of skills that anyone and everyone could (and should) wisely learn.

When in the 1970s and 1980s neoliberal theory began its ascent to the hegemonic position it now enjoys, the scope of entrepreneurialism likewise expanded.[6] Where entrepreneurialism was once exclusively

[6] As Fine and and Milonakis (2009, 62) describe, the key turning point came after the US Federal Reserve's failed attempt to limit the growth of the money supply based on Friedman's understanding of inflation.

defined in relation to a class of individuals who possessed a high tolerance for risk and a skill-set associated with the management and operation of a private-sector business, it came to also refer more generally to an individual's learned ability to self-help, tolerate risk, and adapt to fluid and hyper competitive conditions. Again, not only was this transition and expansion hardly noticed, at least in terms of the theoretical manipulations just outlined, it was also assiduously prosecuted by the likes of Friedman, Director, and a host of other like-minded members of the Mont Pelerin Society (van Horn, 2009; Fine and Milonakis, 2009).

By the end of the 1980s, the extension of entrepreneurialism was increasingly normalized. David Harvey (1989), for example, highlighted what he describes as the turn from "managerialism to entrepreneurialism" as critical to the transformation of urban spaces in the 1980s. More germane to the current subject, Slaughter and Leslie (1997), as well as Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) usefully discussed the development of the "entrepreneurial university" in American higher education, also after 1980. For them, the press towards entrepreneurialism in the emergent neoliberal university was evidenced, first and foremost by a series of juridical changes that were intended to incentivize particular forms of research and behaviour, specifically those that had an entrepreneurial bent. In the US, a suite of legislation including, but not limited to, Bayh-Dole (1980), made it possible for the results of publicly-subsidized research to be held privately (i.e., licensed or sold to the highest bidder). Following this, jurisdictions throughout the world rapidly followed suit, or, where legislation was not required, simply became more permissive with respect to the privatization of publicly-funded research. Thus faculty the world over were encouraged to explore and develop their entrepreneurial talents. States also began to encourage university-based scientists to commercialize the results of their research by setting new funding guidelines and priorities. As in many other jurisdictions, Canada and Ontario were quick to move, albeit somewhat less aggressively than was the case in places like the UK, New Zealand, and Australia. In 1997, Canada's federal government founded the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), a CDN$ 9 billion concern that is focused on financing the capital costs related to conducting commercially oriented and university-based research (Polster, 2007). Of course, such moves by the federal government came a decade-and-a-half after Ontario's universities, through the COU, first suggested that the government link research funding to commercial priorities (Trick, 2005). And the

formation of the CFI also came a decade and a half after the provincial government announced the Ontario Centres for Excellence program, which has since been the hallmark of neoliberal science policy in the province. And this policy drift has hardly stalled since then, as has been elucidated by scholars of various stripes (Fisher, Atkinson-Grosjean, and House, 2001; Fisher et al., 2009; Newson and Buchbinder, 1988; Newson, 1998; Coleman and Kamboureli, 2011).

ENTREPRENEURIALISM NORMALIZED

The fact that the roll-out of policy, backstopped as it has been by a theoretically transfigured liberalism and a politically minded juggernaut, has helped to normalize and universalize entrepreneurialism, is of course, only half of the story. The other half has to do with the various ways in which such policies have been reinforced by both other system and institutional-level changes (in Ontario and around the world) as well as by social forces that hardly reside within the policymaking domain, conventionally defined. For instance, the bid to publish and avoid perishing has almost certainly helped to transform conventions of collegial self-governance and thereby to empower an ever larger class of professional managers inside Ontario's universities. The time required to prepare publication makes it necessary for faculty to forgo involvement in the management of their institutions, a role they therefore have ceded to managers.[7] The "intersticial organizations" with which both Slaughter and Leslie (1997) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2004), were concerned in their analyses of academic capitalism and the entrepreneurial university in the US, things like tech transfer offices[8], also became increasingly visible – and powerful – components of every university in

[7] The "publish or perish" orthodoxy and its arrival in Ontario is hard to date precisely. This is because that orthodoxy is reinforced by a multitude of policies operating and practices at different levels of the university and also because it is reinforced by the way in which the pressure to publish plays-out in other jurisdictions - Ontario's universities compete internationally for standing, status, market-share in the lucrative market for foreign students, as well as private-sector funding. Also, tight and hyper-competitive job markets in other jurisdictions are forcing newly minted PhDs to compete on a world-scale. Ontario's universities' increased reliance on contract and contingent faculty, itself a by-product of fiscal tightness since the late 1970s, has certainly increased the pressure to be productive (Rajagopal, 2002). The increasingly heated competition for funding from the three federal granting agencies has also long played a role (Polster, 2007; Polster, 2003). The progressive imposition of productivity measures, which began with unregulated, but nonetheless significantly regulative, ranking exercises in the early 1990s has also intensified the issue immensely, as has the recent advent of performance-based pay at some of Ontario's universities (Newstadt, 2013).

[8] Since the mid-1990s, all of Ontario's universities have developed either tech-transfer offices, offices of research and innovation, or similar institutional bodies designed to developed greater links between the private-sector and the university.

Ontario, not least because a large and growing segment of the faculty have come to require and demand the assistance and support that such offices provide.[9]

Insofar as a core segment of the faculty has been insulated from many of the pressures and changes just mentioned, they have, nonetheless, also been forced to prove their utility by being entrepreneurial. Programs need to ensure enrolment targets are met; faculty need to demonstrate a certain level of productivity in terms of things like grant dollars earned or measures of bibliometric impact (Grant, 1998; Handford, 2002).[10] Thus, regardless of whether or not academic work is commercially-oriented or even steadfastly opposed to "academic capitalism", it is necessarily caught-up in a process of commodity production. The ideological and ideational consequences of such behaviour are difficult to overstate. The need to publish, to compete for funding, or to improve one's bibliometric ranking, propels scholars to undertake forms of inquiry that can quickly yield publishable results: quantitatively oriented, model-based, and/or circumscribed, discrete, and ideologically narrow exercises that are precisely the forms of thought that are now hegemonic within the contemporary university. Of course, the pressure faced by full-time and tenured academics are amplified for academics whose employment is temporary and contingent. Though there are some very recent indications that contingent faculty are mobilizing in opposition, most contingent faculty are still forced to comply and attempt to eke out an existence by shoring-up the proverbial boat: publish feverishly and reward students with high grades in the hope that they may, in turn, reward them with good student evaluation of teaching questionnaire scores. And for the army of postdoctoral researchers upon which Ontario's research-intensive institutions depend, the pressure to commercialize

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[9] As I have argued elsewhere, the pace of neoliberal transformation in Ontario was certainly slower than it was in other jurisdictions. This is so for several reasons, including the relatively militant and active nature of organized labour in Ontario right-up until the early 1990s. In the 1970s and early 1980s, faculty in Ontario's universities, also waged a vigorous effort to press-back against the ascendant neoliberal tide as the spate of faculty unionizations in the province during that period is testament (Newstadt, 2013). But that process stalled in the mid-1980s, when faculty at the University of Toronto balked at the idea of unionization in part because the government and the COU embraced the idea of market-based, rather than government-directed, institutional reform. Apparently, a sufficient number of faculty at the University of Toronto saw in such reform the potential for terrific advantage, given the University's position as the largest and most research-intensive institution in the country (Newstadt, 2013, 384).

[10] Aside from the fact that faculty at several universities in Ontario have been subjected to performance-based pay, there is a growing number of examples, albeit outside of Ontario and Canada, where contracts around tenure have simply been broken (Pitchford, 2012; Willmott, 1995; Willmott, 2003).

and be entrepreneurial is intense and outlined as an embedded and inescapable "fact" of university-based research (Holloway, 2014). The recent, and largely successful, efforts of postdoctoral researchers to unionize in Ontario (and across Canada), has often been inspired by the apparent need for postdoctoral researchers to protect their stake in the intellectual property they participate in developing.[11]

Similarly, students have responded to government- and university administration-led efforts to turn students into customers by thoroughly embracing that ideology.[12] Increasingly, students are concerned to ensure that they get their money's worth, not so much by dedicating themselves to the pursuit of higher learning, but rather to the pursuit of high-grades, irrespective of the quality of the work they submit. Unquestionably, this attitude has been fostered and fomented by the imposition of ever-higher tuition-fees and the frequently repeated dictum that a university education is best viewed as a kind of investment vehicle.[13] Nonetheless, students do increasingly conceive of themselves in terms that hardly change when they leave the local mall and head to Ontario's institutions of higher learning. In fact, at Ryerson University it is not even necessary to leave the local mall in order to get to the university. Even where campuses are more easily distinguished from retail outlets, they often house malls and are increasingly replete with the very same kinds of advertising and branding campaigns that one encounters in retail contexts. Much of the advertising and branding that students encounter is put out by their universities, which have become aggressive advertisers with carefully crafted branding campaigns of their own.

Students' desire to obtain the most marketable degree is also understandable as a by-product of ongoing economic malaise and

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[11] I was recently involved in an organizing drive for postdocs at Dalhousie University. Not only did we draw heavily from similar such drives in Ontario and draw from peoples' experiences in that Province, but postdocs at Dalhousie also identified the protection of their intellectual property as one of the most important reasons why they felt the need to unionize.

[12] The "student-as-consumer" model and its ubiquity in Ontario's universities is evidenced in a multitude of ways. First, tuition-fees have increased dramatically, as have levels of student-debt and consumer-debt held by both students and their families. The final report of the Rae Review, like several other such reports through the 1980s and 1990s consistently use the language of investment and the private-returns to investment in education as a means by which to encourage students to conceive of themselves as investors/customers.

[13] Bob Rae, among others, has been one of the most notable champions of the idea that a university education is a kind of investment vehicle, one whose benefits accrue to the individual. See the final report of the so-called "Rae Review", the 2005 government appointed committee investigating the state of higher education in Ontario, to which Rae was appointed the Chair (Rae 2005).

historically high levels of youth unemployment. In such a context, students are understandably wont to forgo the apparent risks of an "impractical" education when it comes to things like program and course selection or the demands that they make of their professors for "useful" knowledge that can be easily applied in the pursuit of employment and security. Either way, students increasingly demand that all of their courses take on an applied or practical bent. The aforementioned Ryerson University, a one-time polytechnic long described as "Rye-High" because of its ongoing focus on applied programming, has seen the largest net increase of applications by high-school seniors, something that the University's current President attributes to, "our message of innovation, entrepreneurship and connection to community" (Ryerson University, 2012). Of course, as Readings (1996) pointed out in his excellent excurses on the university (he discussed Canada's institutions most closely) and the discourse of "excellence", the stranglehold of ranking and measurement, and, it might be added, of entrepreneurialism and commercialization, is such that the content of a course no longer matters very much; in breaking the university into so many discrete and measurable bits, the utility of which are only ever a by-product of market valuation, students' intellectual curiosity is undermined and made alien and unrecognizable, except perhaps as its own kind of commodity. It is perhaps useful to recall that student evaluation of teaching (SETs) were, in an all too ironic twist of capitalist fate, dreamed-up by students as a means by which to force their teachers to assign the kinds of radical texts, like Marx's *Capital*, (not Piketty's), which were once hard to find in American universities, as they have arguably become again, albeit with a decidedly less vocal an opposition (Gray and Bergmann, 2003).

The mutually reinforcing bottom-up and top-down march towards applied and instrumental forms of knowledge just described is also having an impact on the nature and disciplinary background of the faculty in Ontario's universities. As new programs and strategic directions are chosen less for their academic excellence than for the degree to which they provide new streams of potential revenue, new links to emerging private-sector players, as well as potential reputational gains (Dill, 2003; Hazelkorn, 2007; Readings, 1996), Ontario's universities are shifting their programmatic foci. According to data from the COU's new Council of Quality Assurance, of the 146 programs approved since September of 2011, fully 107 are of an

obviously-applied nature.[14] Where faculty in those quarters of the university still bent on teaching radical ideas have not already been forced to adapt, as was outlined above, they are nonetheless rapidly becoming outnumbered by those whose concerns and ambitions jibe more fully with students/customers, university administrators and government bureaucrats.

Insofar as the scope of entrepreneurialism in the university stretches beyond that of any particular program or curricula, it also stretches beyond the university as well. As I suggested above, the emergence of the neoliberal university, and within it of "entrepreneurialism" coincided with (and was partly a response to) an emergent orthodoxy concerning the state's appropriate role in the political economy. Just as critical, however, was the reemergence of global finance in a renewed and transformed program of capitalist accumulation. What is germane about this is the fact that the rebirth of global finance in the 1970s and 1980s involved incredible innovation and extension such that every aspect of daily life was/is measured and subsumed within global flows of capital (Langley, 2008; LeBaron, 2010; Lapavitsas, 2011; Krippner, 2005; Gindin and Panitch, 2012). The university – and those within it - has hardly been insulated either from such transformations or from the avowedly political calculations of those that authored them. Thus, the spread of entrepreneurialism throughout the whole university has been "over-determined", and that over-determination is itself evidence of a new "common sense", a new neoliberal subjectivity to which no one is entirely immune. As is discussed immediately, the proverbial "facts on the ground" place the promises and realities of neoliberalism in sharp relief. And while this relief makes it all the more tempting to dispense with the issue of agency, we should not be so easily seduced, for the reproduction of neoliberalism is nonetheless affected by so many acts of commission at all socio-economic and political levels of our society.

NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTS: (NOT)FACING THE FACTS

It is, of course, hardly coincidental that the new entrepreneurialism is deeply embedded and at absolute odds with the realities that most students are likely to face when they graduate. Simply put, the idea that students-cum-entrepreneurs will act as any kind of impetus for durable

[14] This calculation is based on my own review of the information published on the Quality Council's website at: http://oucqa.ca/program-approvals-menu/program-approvals/

forms of economic growth, which is frequently presented as the reason why Ontario's universities have had to develop and expand their business incubator and crowd-funding programs, is not credible given the facts. According to Statistics Canada, in 2012, most workers in Ontario were employed by firms employing over 300 people. Moreover, firms employing over 500 people, which Statistics Canada counts as "large" firms, employed roughly 90 percent of that majority. Firms with fewer than five employees, which is the size of most start-up firms, have never made-up much more than 6 percent of total employment in Ontario. In fact, between 2001 and 2014, small- and medium-sized employers (SMEs) of all sizes have accounted for a decreasing proportion of total employment. While it is perhaps true that SMEs have generated relatively more job growth than have large firms, between 2001 and 2012 they also generated about the same amount of job destruction. In other words, SMEs have tended to shrink and go out of business far more frequently than their larger counterparts.[15] Seventeen years ago, in 1997, researchers at Statistics Canada recognized these facts, and detailed some of the risks associated with employment in SMEs. There is no reason to believe that any of these facts have changed, particularly given the stagnancy of Ontario's economy. Although the overall tone of the Statistics Canada report nonetheless champions the cause of entrepreneurialism in Canada in notes that,

> "People working at small- and medium-sized firms are especially susceptible [to unemployment and insecurity]. While small businesses have accounted for a disproportionately high share of employment growth over the past decade (Picot, Baldwin, and Dupuy, 1994), they are more prone to failure. Young firms are also more at risk: over half the new firms that fail in the first ten years of life fail within the first two years of operation." (Statistics Canada, 1997, 11)

And not only are workers at small firms more susceptible to business failure when they wind up working for SMEs, they are also susceptible to lower incomes: between 2001 and 2012, workers at start-ups earned, on average, 17.2 percent less than did workers at large firms. Small firms also tend to offer fewer benefits and do not provide workers with access to either defined benefit or defined contribution pensions with nearly the same frequency as do large employers. And we also know that dollar-for-dollar, larger, multi-employer pensions are significantly more stable,

[15] All data is from Statistics Canada, CANSIM database. CANSIM TABLE 2810041

provide workers with a better return on their investment, and thereby ultimately add to the health of the economy than do single employer or matched contribution pensions (Arthurs, 2008).

These patterns are unlikely to change any time soon. This is because growing inequality and stagnating wages pose real challenges to the ability of most Canadians to continue to consume at current levels, let alone invest in the next "big thing". Also, the reluctance on the part of corporate Canada to start investing what are now unprecedentedly large stockpiles of cash is also exacerbating the problem of youth unemployment (Isfeld, 2014). The unwillingness of those same corporations – as well as the federal and provincial government – to relent on wages and permit even mild inflation likely add further fuel to the unemployment fire. At any rate, the point is that absent the sudden and massive expansion of available seed capital, it is unlikely that many more start-ups than currently get funded will be able to swing into business let alone succeed; even the status-quo for start-ups will be difficult to maintain. And finally, the relationship between SMEs and large firms is such that the success of many SMEs is utterly dependent on the performance of large firms.

One indication that both the government and Ontario's universities understand how wide is the chasm between the promise of the new entrepreneurialism and the realities of the market, is the recently outlined assertion that "entrepreneurship" programs will teach students to become "intra-preneurs", that is, "employees who behave like entrepreneurs *within the context of a large organization*" (emphasis added) (COU, 2013). In so describing the hoped-for impact of entrepreneurial learning, the universities are not only offering a far more realistic assessment of graduates' life-chances, they are also helping to shed some light on what the new entrepreneurialism is, in part, really about the acculturation to a particular way of life. This point is central to Sears and Cairns' (2014) recent analysis of the new entrepreneurialism as a policy program designed, on the one hand, to "teach disentitlement" and, on the other hand, open room to manoeuvre Ontario's universities into a more clearly hierarchical, "differentiated" and class-based "family" of institutions. The problem with their analysis lies not so much in terms of what Sears and Cairns describe as the intent of the new entrepreneurialism, but rather in what this assessment seems to imply, namely that disentitlement is being taught anew and has not already been thoroughly assimilated by the great majority of students in Ontario's universities. This assessment is perhaps reasonably made, given the design and intent of their article, students' life chances, and the COU's rather

revealing deployment of 'intra-praneurialism'.[16] However, the perhaps unintended implication of their analysis, namely that students are only being taught disentitlement because of top-down influences, and not actively demanding the same, is a conclusion that should be avoided.

This is so for several reasons, all of which stem from the analysis provided above. First and foremost, there is absolutely no indication that students are objecting to the neoliberal orthodoxy, either as would-be entrepreneurs or intra-praneurs. To be sure, groups like the Canadian Federation of Students have consistently and laudably pushed for a complete overhaul of funding for higher education and research. However, the absence of a vigorous labour movement willing and able to champion the cause of public investment and national ownership means that calls for low or no tuition-fees, or the removal of conditional ear-marks for research funding amount to little more than a kind of reform-liberal "level playing field" type of argument. Whether students are to be entrepreneurs or intra-praneurs, the oppositional scope that the students' movement enjoys is incredibly restricted. There is also good reason to suspect that students are increasingly less able to cogently question the logic behind either the new entrepreneurialism or neoliberalism in general. Aside from a slate of anecdotal evidence regarding writing quality and critical thinking ability (Smith, 2000), data from now three OECD and Statistics Canada sponsored international adult literacy tests suggests that the majority of university graduates are only literate enough to read and follow directions (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2011; OECD and Statistics Canada, 1995; OECD, 2013). And again, the neoliberalization of higher education, in Ontario as elsewhere, has also involved a sizeable shift in terms of both the normative position occupied by a large chunk of the professoriate, and the epistemological and ontological foundations upon which their academic practices are built.

The idea that government policy merely continues to "teach" disentitlement is also best avoided because it is reproductive of several far more problematic tropes and tendencies within the "mainstream" literature on higher education in Ontario. Unlike Sears and Cairns, mainstream analyses of higher education in Ontario are rooted in what can best be described as a kind of left institutionalism. In this frame, the neoliberal "drift" of higher education policy is generally explained as

[16] It should be pointed out that the article in question is not – and was clearly not intended as – a scholarly work. Their article appeared in a popular and politically oriented magazine, and was clearly meant to describe government policy and the kind of oppositional organizing that is required to press-back against such policy. The article does not seek to problematize or understand agency, so much as it seeks to mobilize.

a by-product of decision-making at the upper echelons of government bureaucracies and university administrations. Without ever denying the social, political, and economic impacts of neoliberal policy in and around Ontario's universities, or the reproductive and redistributive impacts of neoliberalism outside of the university, little attempt is ever made to understand power in a manner that would make visible the kinds of issues raised above. In fact, though rife with references to "academic capitalism", most analyses of Ontario's system of higher education tend to see government policy as having had a decidedly uneven impact on the university, often in a kind of zero-sum manner. Accordingly, some departments are heavily impacted, while others are left largely untouched. David Trick (2005), for example, diagnoses a "paradigm shift" around university-based research and research-funding, but not with respect to programs taught.[17] As such, neoliberal policy appears within the mainstream literature as that which is only ever threatening to takeover and transform apparently "far from the market fields." (Fisher, Atkinson-Grosjean, and House, 2001; Axelrod, 2008; Fisher et al., 2009; Clark, 2009; Trick, 2005).

This analytical frame is not particularly new to the study of higher education in Ontario. For the most part it is built on epistemological and ontological foundations that favour clearly institutionalized and obviously proximate lines of causation. For example, the commonly held belief that Ontario's universities enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy and independence is generally gleaned from studies of Ontario's system that have emphasized the fact that Ontario's universities have consistently been allowed to self-regulate, generally in response to threatened intervention (Jones, 2004; Trick, 2005; Royce, 1998). Even in instances where the universities' self-regulatory response to threatened intervention operates according to the same logic and set of priorities as would have government imposed programs, as was arguably the case with quality assessment, the mainstream literature interprets such as an example of neoliberal policy being kept at bay.[18] In other words, absent the imposition of neoliberal policy and clear new regulatory practices/programs that effect and substantively change the nature of academic work, what happens in Ontario's universities is not "neoliberal". In this

[17] In his above referenced doctoral dissertation, David Trick (Trick, 2005) sees the emergence of conditional forms of research funding tied to commercialization as evidence of an emerged "paradigm", but one that he does not see as in any way dominant.

[18] Apparently because the universities can control and amend quality assessment processes, and, most importantly, maintain systems of peer review, institutional autonomy and academic freedom is (re)secured (Gesink-Walsh, 2007; Jones, 1991; Jones, 2004).

way, the university, or the day-to-day rhythms and practices therein, is ascribed an ontological status outside and apart from the political economy (or "politics", "society", "the market"). More than this, the university and those within it are held to be almost inert and plastic receptors whose transformation and reconfiguration happens episodically and infrequently.

Though these assertions map into a hierarchical ordering of causation, there is no way to subject that ordering to critique. On the contrary, key or primary "causative variables", like the neoliberal orientation of policy, are simply asserted as such without any sustained or coherent way to assess whether policy should be analytically privileged or viewed alongside other such 'causative variables'. It is also not possible within this analytic frame to understand how policy is ontologically different and more important than, for example, students' level of indebtedness or professors' pre-occupation with publication counts, when it comes to explaining either the presence or absence of direct governmental intervention. As a result, most analyses of Ontario's system of higher education fail to pick-up on or understand: 1) the impact had by neoliberal policy on all areas of the university; 2) the links between and impact of the development and evolution of neoliberal capitalism and the transformation of both public policy and the whole university; and, 3) the reasons why a simple "regulatory fix" are not likely to either resuscitate or preserve the capacity for critical thought within Ontario's universities.[19] This is perhaps why mainstream scholarship on higher education in Ontario has all but ignored the emergence of new business incubators and crowd funding programs; though arguably exemplary of neoliberal drift, such programs are viewed as relatively insignificant manifestations of such given their status as extracurricular programs.

TOWARDS AN ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL HOLISM

In recognizing the manner in which the domain of entrepreneurialism has shifted we are better able to recognize and make plain the degree to which the new entrepreneurialism, as well as the surrounding discourse, are remarkable, and in some ways quite subtle, obfuscations that work much as they are intended to work: they aid in the reproduction of

[19] Whether or not the COU maintains control of the province's quality assessment program, it will still operate to rationalize the system along neoliberal lines, and even if some provision is made to ensure the maintenance of adequate levels of funding for all programs so as to avoid pedagogical convergence, that convergence will still continue to take place.

neoliberal capitalism. Also, by connecting broader shifts in the political economy with the development and evolution of students' and faculty members', and administrators' subjectivities, we see agency in a new light and, simultaneously, open new avenues for the progressive reform of the university. We are also better positioned to understand why practitioners in the mainstream may be less willing or able to see agency where it exists, and to thereby locate and understand power dynamically instead of as something that has ossified in particular parts of particular institutions or institutional arrangements.

Generally speaking, Marxian and some post-structural analyses of higher education, in and outside of Ontario, have proven much more adept at documenting and describing the extensive nature of neoliberalism than have their institutionalist counterparts. Indeed, critical analysts have usefully outlined the way in which the redirection of funding is not just ghettoizing so-called "basic" or "frontier" research, but also, and at the same time, normalizing the pursuit of commercially oriented research, such that the further instantiation of neoliberal policy often comes at the behest of academics themselves and not just as a by-product of either governmental or administrative efforts to grow the amount of commercially oriented research undertaken in Ontario's institutions (Polster, 2007). Similarly, Sears (2003) has also outlined the way in which higher education has been "retooled" with the aim of "producing" students that are better able to fit within, and thereby reproduce, contemporary, neoliberal capitalism. And Newson and Buchbinder (1988), famously detailed the manner in which faculty have oftentimes demanded neoliberal reform, as much as they have organized against it. But even here, there remains something of a gap in the literature, not least as concerns the significance of the new entrepreneurialism, which has not received very much attention at all. The gap in question has to do with the failure to fully account for the scope of both neoliberalism and the accordant neoliberalization of higher education, which even radical scholars have tended to describe in terms that seek to preserve concepts of agency less by outlining the ways in which students and faculty have worked to produce neoliberalism and the neoliberal university, than by seeking to accentuate the cracks, fissures, and contradictions of those processes. By focussing, as Sears and Cairns do, on the vicious malevolence of government and university administrative policy and the importance of a "decolonized" curriculum, they arguably pull us away from a longer, far more disconcerting, look in the mirror and the myriad ways in which even oppositional activities can

help to reproduce the very malevolence to which we object.[20] Students and a huge swathe of the professoriate have internalized the lessons of disentitlement that neoliberalism – operating both in and outside of Ontario's universities - has had to teach, so much so that a large component of both groups now feels entitled to learn disentitlement, by which I mean the skills and aptitudes necessary for self-help and increasingly competitive labour markets. The new entrepreneurial programs are thus additive to and reinforcing of the entrepreneurial self-understanding that has been consistently encouraged in the neoliberal university since the early 1980s.

As a result, the new entrepreneurial programs will operate as "poles of adjustment" around which every other taught program will be forced to articulate; to compete for students and funding, every program taught will be pushed and prodded to root students in methodological approaches to art, or geography, or political science, or anthropology, or whatever, that can be used instrumentally by students when they inevitably look to pull up their boot-straps and make entrepreneurial hay. Thus, to the extent that previous rounds of restructuring have not completely evacuated critical thought and potential from the contemporary university, the most recent incarnations of "entrepreneurialism" promise to do just that: annihilate the limited space that remains for meaningful forms of pluralism.

Of course, the terrain of neoliberalism, like that of the neoliberal university, is hardly even or seamless. Perhaps the most pressing contradiction with which neoliberalism and the neoliberal university will have to reckon has to do with the inability of neoliberal ideology to speak to, and explain, peoples' lived realities. High rates of unemployment, particularly amongst youth, alongside ever-higher levels of consumer and student debt, all in the context of growing inequality will likely pose

[20] Sears and Cairns are entirely correct when they highlight the fact that the new entrepreneurialism is a significant force behind the pressure to differentiate. Sears and Cairns are also right insofar as mainstream thinkers are wont to read any symptoms of decay and crisis when diagnosed in relation to Ontario's system of higher education as having less to do with the emergence of the neoliberal university than with efforts to contain it. Indeed, within mainstream circles, the problems that are affecting Ontario's eighteen publicly assisted universities are seen to be a by-product, if anything, of the government's unwillingness and inability to support the further marketization of Ontario's universities. Indeed, by enabling the universities to maintain operating revenues without concomitant demands that courses properly prepare students for life after graduation, the government is alleged to have fuelled expansion in ways that have created programmatic duplication and an overriding sense of entitlement. This form of analysis generally yields a diagnosis that highlights the need for market-based or market-type reform, albeit in a manner that is cast as a humane and "realistic" response to the present situation (see for example, Weingarten and Deller, 2010).

a serious challenge to the hegemony of entrepreneurialism. But still, the need for peoples' frustration and anger to be mobilized and directed is inescapable. In this regard, the trajectory promised via the pursuit of entrepreneurial learning and institutional differentiation will possibly prove to be fecund ground for organizing in Ontario. Already, higher education is the most unionized sector of the Canadian political economy. While the government's program of institutional differentiation will not change that, it is likely to create a new set of internal divisions, for instance between teaching-stream and tenure-stream faculty, as well as between faculty at teaching-intensive and "full-service" institutions.

While such divisions may internally fracture some unions, they may also lead some faculty to feel stronger allegiances to part-time and contingent faculty, to teaching and research assistants, to students groups, and to other public-sector unions, where austerity has involved persistent attacks. In other words, where the "precariate" in the academy have, to date, not been able to foment particularly strong connections to tenure-stream and tenured academics, they may well discover strong allies in the precariate working outside the academy, in organized labour more generally, and among those faculty, contingent or not, who are converted to – and ghettoized in – teaching stream positions. In this the new entrepreneurial programs and the drive to differentiate Ontario's institutions via market-type mechanisms and incentives, may be sowing the seeds of transformation in a manner entirely befitting the so-called "knowledge-based economy". In looking to intensify the exploitation of those workers whose work is to produce "knowledge workers" that are less likely to object to the intensification of exploitation, the government may well create the conditions for "knowledge workers" throughout the services based economy to organize and object.

Then again, the alternative possibility seems now just as likely. Given the remarkably compromised position of organized labour and the relative quiescence of students in Ontario in the face of a stagnant economy and high youth unemployment, it would seem that students have already come to understand that their fates lie not collectively, but as individual businesses. It may well be that the new entrepreneurial programs help to consolidate and reproduce an ideology that will be linked to a still more flexible labour force than the province now enjoys. Again, it is important that we recognize how efficient the university has already proven to be in the "production of ignorance", and thereby in producing the conditions that complicate the organization of an opposition. Of course, if students do come to challenge the neoliberal

university, it will likely not be as a result of what happens within that institution, but rather because durable links are built between students and a revived labour movement. Though hardly a reason to hold out significantly more hope, it does, at a minimum, mean that the potential for the progressive transformation of Ontario's universities does not reside exclusively within them, but may also be ignited by progressive change in the larger political economy. In other words, hope rests in the multitude.

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